



J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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May 24, 2005

TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **WILENE'S CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Wilene's Children of the Village Foster Family Agency (Wilene or Agency), a Foster Family Agency (FFA) service provider. The review was conducted by the Auditor-Controller's Countywide Contract Monitoring Division.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Wilene, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Wilene is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Wilene oversees a total of 15 certified foster homes in which 37 DCFS children were placed. Wilene is located in the Fifth District.

DCFS pays Wilene a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Wilene receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, the Agency pays the foster parents between \$625 and \$800 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2003-04, DCFS paid Wilene approximately \$840,000.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Wilene was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Wilene's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Wilene received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Wilene's staff, the children and the foster parents. We also visited a sample of certified foster homes.

Results of Review

Generally, Wilene provided the services required by the County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they received from the Agency met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoy living with their foster parents. Wilene also maintained appropriate staffing levels and their case loads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22.

Wilene needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the provisions of Title 22 and the County contract. For example, for one home we visited, the windows in the child's room were unsafe and cleaning solutions were not maintained in a secured area. It appears that both of these conditions have existed for some time and should have been detected by Wilene's social worker during their regularly scheduled visit to the foster home. In addition, one of Wilene's staff did not possess the education required by the contract and Title 22 regulations.

We recommend Wilene ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract requirements and Title 22 Regulations. In addition, Wilene needs to ensure that all staff working on the County contract possess the education required by the contract and Title 22 regulations.

The details of our review, along with recommendations for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

On May 6, 2005, we discussed our report with Wilene who agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Wilene's management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations contained in the report. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Wilene for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MMO:DC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Dr. David Sanders, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Karen Dixon, Director, Wilene's Children of the Village Foster Family Agency
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2004-2005
WILENE'S CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

PROGRAM SERVICES

Objective

To determine whether Wilene's Children of the Village Foster Family Agency (Wilene or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations.

Verification

We visited three of the 15 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Wilene billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for in March and April 2004. In addition, we interviewed the five foster parents and five children placed in the three homes. We also reviewed the documentation in their case files and the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Generally, Wilene provided the services outlined in its County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Wilene meet their expectation and the children indicated that they enjoy living with their foster parents.

Wilene needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes to ensure that the foster homes are complying with all the provisions of Title 22 and the County contract. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitations

- For one home visited, the children's' bedroom window was missing a screen, had a broken handle, and could not be opened fully due to security bars. We also noted that cleaning solutions were in unlocked areas, the side yard had over-grown weeds that posed a fire hazard, and the garage was cluttered with furniture, old appliances and mounds of clothing making it difficult for the young adults in the home to access the washer and dryer as part of their independent living program. The County contract and Title 22 require that foster homes be maintained in good condition at all times and that safety hazards such as toxins be stored in locked cabinets. Subsequent to our review, the home was placed under a corrective action plan and all deficiencies have been corrected.
- One home did not have an emergency exit plan for their second story. The County contract and Title 22 require that Agencies monitor to ensure each bedroom has a

safe and direct emergency exit to the outside. We noted that the last annual home inspection did not identify this deficiency. Subsequent to our review, the home purchased an escape ladder.

Allowance

- One foster child's allowance was reduced until a punishment was completed. The child indicated that her foster parents usually do not reimburse the reduction when the punishment has been completed. The County contract requires Agencies to ensure that foster parents follow the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and do not apply monetary consequences as punishment without reimbursing the child when the punishment has been completed. We also noted that the foster home's case file did not contain documentation that Wilene completes a home visit report, which includes a review of allowance logs.

Wilene management needs to ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract requirements and Title 22 regulations.

Recommendation

1. **Wilene's management ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract requirements and Title 22 regulations.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

To determine whether the program participants actually received the services that Wilene billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed five children placed in three certified foster homes and five foster parents to confirm the services Wilene billed to DCFS.

Results

The program participants interviewed stated that the services they receive from Wilene met their expectations and their assigned social worker visits them regularly.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Determine whether Wilene's social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Wilene's supervising social worker and five social workers. Caseload statistics and payroll records for March and April 2004 were also reviewed.

Results

Each of Wilene's five social workers maintains an active caseload of approximately 11 children. In addition, the supervising social worker supervised five social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Wilene's staff meets the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Wilene conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Wilene's supervising social worker and five social workers. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Wilene's supervising social worker and four of the five social workers possess the education (college degree) and experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Wilene conducted hiring clearances for all staff assigned to the County contract.

One social worker did not meet the educational requirements of the County contract or Title 22 regulations. The social worker was in the process of completing the required college degree at the time of our review and the Agency did not have a Community Care Licensing exception on file for this social worker. Subsequent to our review, the social worker completed the education requirement.

Wilene needs to ensure that all social worker staff meet the education requirements of the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

Recommendation

- 2. Wilene's management ensure that all social work staff meet the education requirements of the County contract and Title 22 regulations.**

Wilene's Children of the Village Foster Family Agency
1173 San Bernardino Avenue
Pomona, CA 91767
Phone (909) 482-4755 Fax (909) 482-4683

May 13, 2005

TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Karen Dixon, FFA Director

**SUBJECT: WILENE'S CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE FOSTER
FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

Pursuant to your review, this letter is in response to the audit results of Wilene's Children of the Village FFA. Overall, Children of the Village is in general agreement with the findings with the following noted observations:

- **Recommendation:** Agency needs to ensure that staff monitors foster homes for compliance with the county contract and Title 22 regulations.

Corrective Action Plan: COTV FFA staff will ensure that foster homes are complying with all the provisions of the county contract during weekly visits and at least monthly staff will do a thorough walk-through of the homes and document deficiencies and implementation dates for the completion of corrective action plans. Continued non-compliance by foster parents will require further action against foster parents, which may include: Administrative holds, replacement of minors in the foster home and/or decertification when necessary. All deficiencies noted during the review have been corrected and maintained to contract and Title 22 standards. COTVFFA requires foster parents to submit a monthly allowance log with the signature of the minor, foster parent and FFA SW'R. FFA SW'R will monitor this more closely to insure that no monetary consequences are being applied inappropriately.

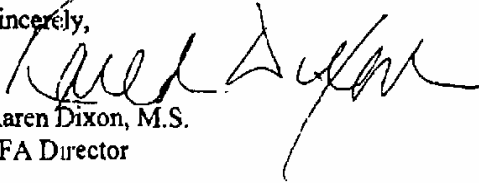
Monthly Home Visits reports are maintained in a binder along with allowance logs in the FFA office a copy of these reports will be also maintained in the foster home file.

- **Recommendation:** Agency needs to ensure that all staff possesses the education required by the contract and Title 22 regulations.

Corrective Action Plan: All FFA Social Workers are required to meet the educational and experience criteria for the job. Although the FFA Social Worker mentioned in the review did not have her degree on file, documentation was available that she had completed the coursework for her master's degree, but had not done a final paper. This information was documented in her file, however, in the future the agency will also request an exemption from CCL to assure that all licensing requirements have been met.

We appreciate the staff of the Auditor Controller on this review who were positive in their approach and helpful to us in maintaining a high quality of service to the children and families we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Dixon", written over the printed name and title.

Karen Dixon, M.S.
FFA Director

Cc: File